

Care and support

Respite care



Some older people are only able to remain at home with assistance from a spouse, relative or friend. The person may be dependent on their carer for daily tasks such as shopping, cooking or bathing. The caring role is often extremely demanding. The carer may become housebound and isolated and need a break.

Respite care enables the carer to have a rest, go out, attend to business, or go on a holiday. It also gives the person they care for the opportunity to meet other people. Respite care can be provided on a planned regular basis for short or long periods of time. In some areas, respite can be provided in an emergency.

Eligibility and access to subsidised services may depend on the age of the person receiving care and their condition.

Community respite care

In-home respite care

Some people may only need a respite care worker to provide minimal assistance in their home while their regular carer has a break. This may include day respite or overnight respite.

Centre-based, out-of-home day respite

Full or half-day programs may be available in day care centres or other community settings. Meals and transport to the facility may be provided as well as activities that will assist socialisation and help increase skill levels and manual dexterity.

Respite care may also involve a person being accompanied by a respite care worker to a community-based activity (e.g. social event or outing), while their carer has a break.

Overnight respite care – respite cottages

Overnight respite care in ‘respite cottages’ ranging from 24 hours to a few days is also available in some areas. These are usually adapted houses and aim to provide a home-like environment, catering for just a few clients at a time.

Some day care centres and most respite cottages are able to provide respite with programs suitable for people with early stages of dementia.

For people aged 65 years and over (55 and over if Indigenous Australians) in-home and community respite care may be available through Australian Government-subsidised services. Contact **My Aged Care tel. 1800 200 422;** www.myagedcare.gov.au.

For younger people with a disability services may be available through an approved National Disability

Insurance Scheme care plan. www.ndis.gov.au, tel. 1800 800 100

Respite care in aged care facility

It may be necessary to arrange for a short period of respite in a Commonwealth-funded aged care facility. This enables carers to have a longer break from their caring role.

First, the person you are caring for needs to be assessed by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT). This can be arranged by a family member or a health professional.

A total of 63 days respite care is allowed per person in a financial year and this time does not have to be taken all at once. It is important to keep a record of the respite days used. If you need to check on the number of respite days you may call Medicare, **tel. 1800 195 206**. There is the possibility of an additional period of 21 days where the ACAT considers extra time is needed.

Once you are approved by the ACAT, you may apply directly to the aged care facility for respite. Where possible, it is advisable to book ahead.

To contact an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) ring **My Aged Care Contact Centre tel. 1800 200 422**. If you have an existing permanent or respite residential care approval that is still valid you need **not** contact **My Aged Care**.

Residential respite fees

In respite you will only pay the basic daily fee of (85% of the basic rate of the single Age Pension) regardless of whether you are a pensioner or not.

Accommodation payment/contribution and means-tested fee do NOT apply to respite residents.

Some facilities provide ‘extra services’. This means that the facility offers a higher standard of accommodation, food or services such as a bigger room, a glass of wine with the evening meal, greater choice of meals and/or superior décor.

It does not mean that a higher standard of care is offered. All facilities must meet the same care standards set by the Australian Government.

If you have respite in an ‘extra services’ facility you may be asked to pay an extra fee to cover the cost of those services.

Some facilities may ask for a booking fee if you organise respite in advance. The facility cannot charge in excess of either a week’s fee, or 25% of the fee for the whole period. This is a PREPAYMENT of respite care fees and not an additional payment.

Pension payment for couple temporarily separated due to respite

Under the Social Security law “*Respite care couples will be assessed against the single rate of payment applicable but the assessment will still take into account the combined income and assets as if they were a member of a couple*”. This means that if a member of the couple is in respite for at least 14 days in a row they may each receive the single rate of the Age Pension for the period. It is important to obtain evidence from the aged care provider and apply to Centrelink as soon as possible. The same principle applies when a member of a couple stays in hospital for two weeks or more.

Hardship provisions

If payment of daily care fees will cause undue hardship, they can be reduced or even waived (excluding extra services fees). Once the Department of Human Services receives your application it will be assessed within 28 days. You will be notified of the decision in writing. Therefore if you want to receive approval before entering respite care, lodge an application well in advance of the planned respite care dates.

Contact **My Aged Care, tel. 1800 200 422** or access the *Financial hardship assistance for Home Care and Residential Respite Care form (SA462)* at www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/forms/sa462

Respite in supported residential facilities and serviced apartments

Supported Residential Facilities (SRFs) provide accommodation and personal care to older people and people with disabilities. SRFs are regulated by the Supported Residential Facilities Act 1992; they are privately operated.

Serviced apartments are a type of retirement village and certain services e.g. meals, may be provided.

ACAT approval is not required for respite in SRFs and serviced apartments. The time available for respite will be determined by the particular facility. It is important to ask what support is available and what it will cost as there are no set services or fees in SRFs and serviced apartments.

Veterans and War Widow(er)s

For eligible veterans and war widow(er)s holding a Gold or White Repatriation Health Card, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) may pay for up to 28 days (196 hours) of respite care in any one financial year. This can be in-home or residential or a combination of both. Seven hours in-home respite is equivalent to one day in a residential respite facility.

DVA will only pay for genuine respite in a residential aged care facility – that is to give a carer a break. DVA will not pay for residential aged care respite for a veteran waiting for permanent placement in a facility.

Contact **Veterans' Home Care, tel. 1300 550 450**

Useful contacts

Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres

provide advice and support to carers seeking respite and help you access respite care. You may be eligible for financial support to pay for short term respite care if you are in financial hardship. Subject to availability and funding constraints, this may include: in-home and out-of-home day respite; overnight respite in a facility; and emergency respite. For information, phone **1800 052 222**. The call will be automatically directed to the nearest centre.

In 2019 changes are being introduced to carer services funded by the Australian Government, with a new integrated carer support service, which will include assistance currently provided through the centres above.

Currently service providers are funded until November 2019.

This fact sheet will be updated as further information becomes available.

For further information on the changes contact the Carer Gateway (see below).

Carer Gateway

This is a national online and phone service that provides practical information and resources to support carers, including respite services, **tel. 1800 422 737**; www.carergateway.gov.au

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